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Philosophical Transactions

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VII. *An Extraordinary Case of a Costive Person, in a Letter from Mr B. Sherman to Dr Beeston of Ipswich; with a Note on the same by Mr William Cowper, F. R. S.*

SIR,

THis person, whose Name was *Thomas Phillips* of *Easthorp*, near *Keldon* in *Essex*, was as well in every respect as a Child could possibly be till he was a year and a quarter old; at which time a very strange and almost continual rumbling in his Intestines seiz'd him, the consequence was a violent Looseness, for which all the Physicians near the place could find no Remedy: But at last, when they despaired of the Childs Life, the Looseness terminated in such an unusual Obstruction, that he did not go to Stool for a fortnight or three weeks together, and from three weeks it proceeded gradually to the intervals of 17 or 18 weeks, and so continued till he came to be about the age of fifteen, when his Body resumed its natural temper, which lasted 4 or 5 years, but then the Obstruction returned, and continued, or rather increas'd till he dyed; for it was customary with him in the last years of his Life not to evacuate any manner of Excrement under the interval of nineteen or twenty weeks, and sometimes (twice at least) he had no discharge for one or two and twenty weeks together. He lived to be near 23 years of Age, and walk'd about almost to the hour of his Death; for he was suddenly seiz'd with very sick Fits (but could not Vomit), two or three of which Fits carry'd him off in a few hours; and when he dy'd it was
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nine weeks after he had any Stole. He dyed about a year after I wrote to you first concerning him. I ask'd him some Questions, which I apprehended necessary, as whether he did Vomit often, or had at any time any Excrementous Tastes in his Mouth, or did Sweat {much, or made more Urine than in proportion to his drinking, or whether he found any ease when he did either Vomit, Sweat or Urined ; all which questions were answered in the Negative. When he did go to Stole he evacuated very many times in a day, and several days together, until he had emptyed himself. But I must tell you, that his Mother assures me, that throughout his whole Life he never discharg'd any other than very thin Excrement.

Before his time of Evacuation came about, he was of an extraordinary bigness many weeks before his going to Stole, unless when he could break Wind, which he often endeavour'd to do, by laying his Body on the edge of a Table or Stool, but could not often by so doing produce the desired effect. He declined the use of all Medicines for many years before he dy'd, contenting himself with going to Stole once in three or four months, or nineteen or twenty weeks, as above mention'd. But that which amuses me as much as any thing is, that he generally had a petty good Stomach, and eat and drank as the rest of the Family did ; nay, till the time that his Body came to be very full, he could do the work of a Man at Plow, or such like Husbandly labour, for Agriculture was his employment. I was very desirous to have open'd his Body, but could by no means convince his Mother of the usefulness and advantage of such a Dissection, which was no small regret to me, for I thought it great pity that such an extraordinary case should not be inquired into, and indeed the Minister of the Parish did press his dissection very hard, but the Mother was yet inflexible. This, Sir, is the truth of his case, and at first may seem almost incredible ; but when I assure you that I had this account
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from the Persons own Mouth in his Life time, confirm'd at the same time by his Mother who is yet living, and has very lately repeated the same to me, I hope it may obtain credit with you; besides I can assure you, that all the Neighbourhood will witness the truth of it, many Gentlemen, Clergymen and others having had the curiosity to see and examine the Person,

Mr Cowper's Note on the foregoing Letter.

It's not improbable, if the Abdomen of this Person had been opened, but some of its Contents would have been found not unlike those I have mentioned, in my Explication of the 34th Table of Prints published by Dr Bidloo; where I take notice of a young Gentlewoman I dissected, in whom I observed the Omentum so lessened, that at first it appeared doubtfull if that part had ever been existent in that subject; but on strict examination the little Remains of it resembled a Congeries of small Glandules, stuffed with a Suet like matter. The whole Canal of the Intestines, even from the Pylorus to the Anus, was distended with Excrements, and the Surfaces of all the small Guts adhered so strictly to each other, that they could not be parted without tearing their external Membrane, to which the Omentum contributed by its adhesion: The whole Compages of the Intestins very much resembling that of the external surface of the Brain covered with the Pia mater, so that the Mesentery in that subject could not be seen till this external inclosure was divided. By this disorder, 'tis certain, the Peristaltick motion of the Guts must needs be very much lessened, if not quite hindered. The Peritonæum also in that case was very much thickened, and had several preternatural white bodies set at various distances on its internal surface; the like appeared on the Stomach, which very much resembled in figure the Military Glands on the back part of the Aspera Arterias.